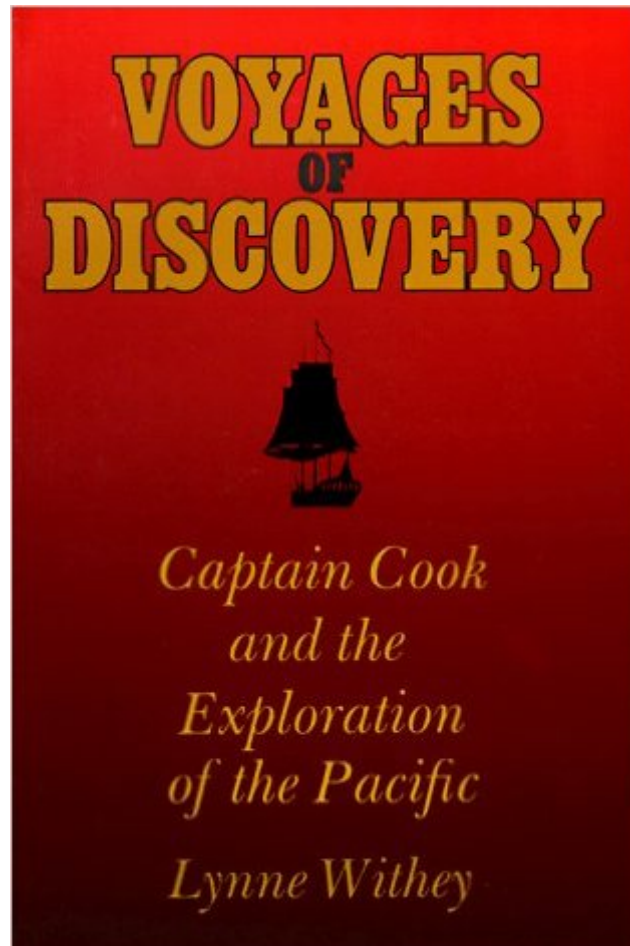


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Voyages Of Discovery: Captain Cook And The Exploration Of The Pacific



Synopsis

Voyages of Discovery is the story of the last great age of European sea exploration, when state-supported expeditions driven by both scientific and political motives set out to map the remaining unknown parts of the globe. Focusing on the voyages of the preeminent explorer, Captain James Cook, who commanded three round-the-world expeditions between 1768 and 1780, Lynne Withey illuminates the Pacific islanders' views of their "discoverers" as well.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Tasked by the Royal Society with tracking the transit of Venus, in August of 1768, James Cook (not yet a captain), and his crew of 85 set sail from England in the Admiralty's 'Endeavor', on his first voyage into the Pacific. Over the next 11 years, until his death at the hands of the Hawaiian natives in Kealakekua Bay, he would confirm beyond a doubt the lack of the fabled southern continent (Terra Australis), circumnavigate New Zealand (mapping and demonstrating it to be two islands, not one), chart the eastern coast of Australia, engage with natives in dozens of locations (from Tahiti and Easter Island to Hawaii and south-central Alaska), vastly improve ship-board conditions and cleanliness, and win the love and admiration of the men who sailed under him. He was a serious man, usually aloof and rarely unguarded, prone to fits of anger (usually justified but less so by the time of his third voyage), who displayed a respect for the natives he encountered that was unmatched in his day. 'Voyages of Discovery' was a pleasure to read from beginning to end. Lynn Withey does a fantastic job of hitting all the major points of Cook's life, objectively stating his strengths and weaknesses as a captain and explorer, analyzing with admirable insightfulness the

impact on the native populations he met, and looking at this period of exploration with a keen and sympathetic eye. All of this is wrapped in a wonderful narrative that makes the entire work consistently engaging. The book opens with an observation made by Oscar Spate (an Australian geographer), that the cataloging and mapping of the Pacific was largely a European act.

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